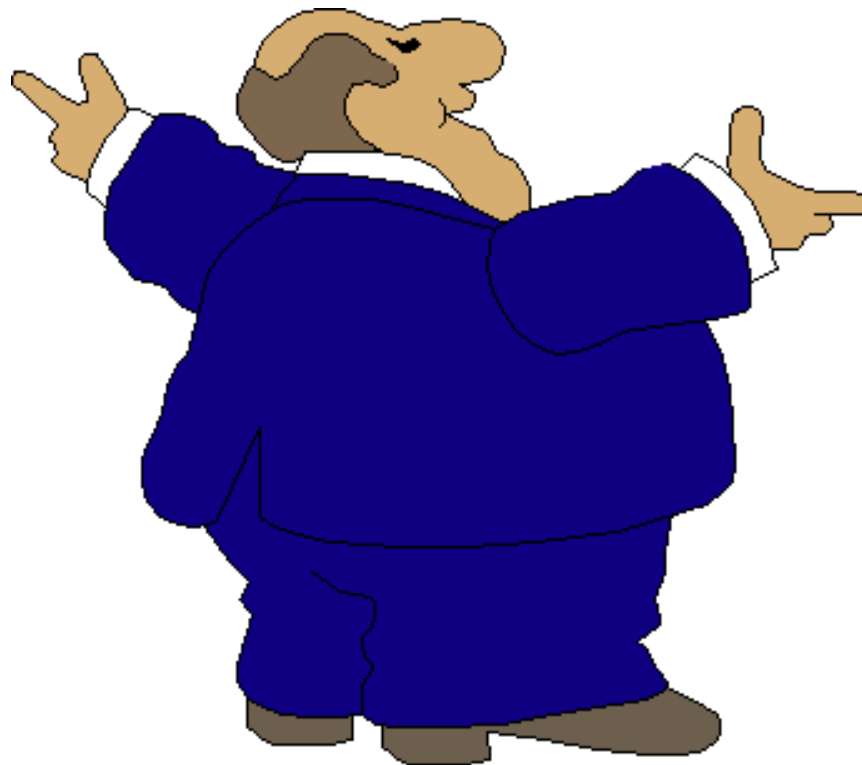


Getting Your Point Across

A Guide to Presentations

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Importance of presentations

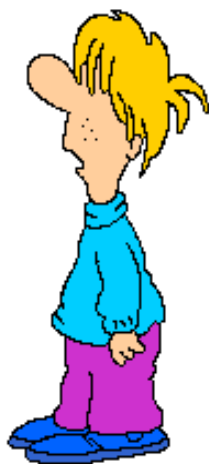
Presentations are an important part of any business. How well they are done can have a major impact on the business you represent and on your personal success.

What are presentations?

Simply stated, presentations are a form of communication. It is a way of sharing information. It can be an interesting and fun way of sharing information.

People spend years developing their knowledge base for their area of expertise, yet expend almost no effort toward learning how to communicate that knowledge to others. If you are reading this material, it indicates that you have an interest in improving your communication skills. Three cheers for you!

Each speaking situation is an opportunity for you to display your expertise and to win others over to your way of thinking. If you're asked to speak on a topic, someone thinks you have information to offer. They value your thoughts. So, why do you have such a dread of speaking in public?



Four Myths about speaking

1 Speakers are born, not made

Not true. Some people may have more of a flair for words than others, but all good speakers have worked hard to make it appear as if their speaking is effortless.

Don't be discouraged when you see an accomplished speaker give an excellent presentation. Experienced presenters make speaking look easy. You can do that too. What you probably don't realize is that even the best speakers need to prepare for and practice their presentations.

2 You should copy someone else's style

When you hear someone give a good presentation, it's tempting to try to imitate or adopt that style. Presentations that we make in the business world will seldom go down in history as memorable speeches. So, great public figures may not be the best role models for the type of presentations that we will make. Good communication is what we should strive for.

There is no one like you. You have a style of your own that will work. Be yourself rather than trying to be like someone else.

3 You never overcome stage fright

We sometimes use this excuse to avoid making presentations — why bother to try, I'm so scared! Even the best of speakers may feel stage fright, but they have learned to use their anxiety to their advantage. They learn to reduce their symptoms to a manageable level and then to channel their anxious energy into enthusiasm that empowers

their presentation. Relief of stage fright comes from knowing that your goal is not to rid yourself of this anxiety, but to learn to become comfortable with the feeling and to use it to enhance your presentation skills.

Stage fright is normal—it is the body’s way of alerting you to be prepared.

Stage fright seems more severe to the speaker than to the audience—they understand and often overlook signs of stage fright. Remember, the audience wants you to succeed.

Stage fright escalates the more you attempt to escape it. Attempting to overlook stage fright is not the answer. Learning to manage the emotion is the answer.

So, how do you overcome stage fright? Be aware of it, accept it, and act upon it.

Be aware of what is happening. Don’t dread it, but just be aware that it is a natural occurrence.

Accept the fear and don’t feel guilty, foolish, or inferior. Most people have stage fright.

Most importantly, act upon it. Don’t let the fear defeat you. Speak positively to yourself—You are prepared. You know the material. You have something to offer to the group. Believe that and be enthusiastic about your presentation. Valid reasons for stage fright include not being prepared and being asked to perform a task that is beyond your expertise. We can be prepared and we rarely are asked to perform beyond our level of expertise.

4 Presentations should be memorized

Memorization does not come easily for most of us. Attempting to memorize a presentation is usually a waste of time. The disadvantages of memorization include:

- It is difficult to recover if you forget the next word or phrase.
- It is difficult to shorten the presentation, should that be necessary.
- The speech could appear very stiff.

Now that we have looked at the myths of public speaking, how do you begin preparing for a presentation?

Plan your presentation

Ask yourself these questions:

Why am I communicating this information?

What is the purpose?

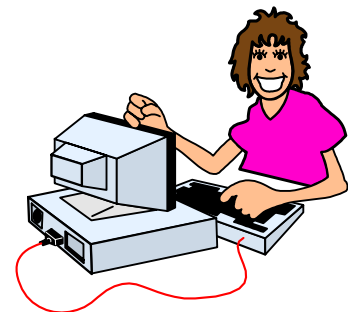
- Inform
- Persuade
- Entertain

What do I hope to gain from the interaction?

Write, or at least think of, a statement of purpose, such as: I plan to provide information that will enable the audience to deliver more effective presentations.

How will the audience benefit from what I have to say?

Make yourself accountable for your thoughts. Are they beneficial? Do you provide information that the audience can use?



Prepare your presentation

A good presentation includes:

- An introduction
- A body developed in a format that fits the information that is to be presented
- A conclusion that reviews the main points of the presentation.

Begin with an outline.

From the outline, you can develop key points. As you develop the outline, you will very likely come up with a clever opening statement. The outline will also help you recap your thoughts for a conclusion.



Chose a format:

There are several ways to present material. How the material is presented is to some extent dependent upon the desired outcome of the presentation.

Is the purpose to educate? Then you may want to use a chronological format. You do this, this, and then this. Or, this is the problem, now this is the solution.

Are you trying to persuade? If you are trying to encourage the audience to think in a certain way, a good approach is to make a statement, then prove that statement.

Do you want the audience to make a decision? Then you may want to use a comparison and contrast format.

You should answer two questions before you prepare a speech seeking a behavioral response:

- 1) Does the audience have the capability to act on this subject?
- 2) Is the proposed action practical?

If the answer is “No” to these questions, then you probably need to revise your presentation.

Develop your material

Collect data, illustrations, and stories that relate to the topic.

Prepare your visual aids

A visual aid is anything, other than the speaker, that is used to assist in communicating.

You can use:

- Slides
- Flip charts
- Transparencies
- On-screen presentation
- Handouts

Slides: Slides are great for picture illustrations. The main disadvantage to slides is that the lights will be out. You have to work hard to maintain the interest of your audience.

Flip charts: Flip charts are effective for training. They can be prepared in advance and you don't have to worry about any mechanical problems. They are also good for keeping track of ideas or comments during an interactive presentation.

Transparencies: Transparencies are perhaps the most versatile of visual aids. They are relatively inexpensive and can be generated quickly. If you frame the transparencies, you can use the frame to make notes to yourself.

Since transparencies are so easy to make, it's tempting to make a transparency of something that is already typed. *Regular typed information is ineffective as a transparency.* It is too small and there is too much information.

Remember, the purpose of a visual aid is to help the audience to concentrate on the topic. The audience doesn't need all the information before them. You're going to tell them what they need to hear. What you need as a visual aid are a few words to help the audience concentrate on the topic at hand.

Good transparencies are:

- Easy to understand
- Large enough to read clearly
- Short, simple, and to the point
- Attractive

Then you, as the presenter, elaborate on the topic.

On-screen presentation: An on-screen presentation can be very smooth and professional. It takes time to develop and the right equipment to deliver. The disadvantage is the worry of equipment failure. It's a good plan to have an alternate method of delivery, such as a handout, just in case the equipment does not work properly.

Handouts: Handouts are good if you're giving the audience information that they need to refer back to. Decide carefully how you want the audience to use the handout. Do you want them to take notes? If so, then you may want to distribute the handouts at the beginning of your presentation. On the other hand, if you are trying to persuade your audience to make some decision, it is usually better to have the attention of the audience and not have them looking at the handout. In this case, it is better to distribute the handout at the end of the presentation.

The various types of visual aids have their advantages and their disadvantages. Determine what visual aids will work best for your presentation. Don't forget to take into consideration the equipment that will be available for delivery of the presentation.

How To Use Visual Aids



- Have the visual aids ready to go before the presentation.
- Don't show them until you are ready.
- Speak to the audience, not to the visual aid.
- Remove the visual aid when you are finished talking about that topic.
- If you are using an overhead, turn off the machine when it is not in use.

You have planned the speech, developed your presentation, and created your visual aids. You are ready, right? Wrong, you've only just begun.

Practice Makes Perfect



At least, that's what we are working toward. Once you have the presentation developed, plan to practice a minimum of five or six times. The more you practice, the more familiar you will be

with the organization of the material. When you practice, strive to recall your material and the logical flow of your topic.

Practicing your presentation has many benefits:

- It increases your confidence.
- It helps alleviate stage fright.
- It assures that the presentation fits into the allotted time.
- It ensures a smoother, better organized, and more easily understood presentation.

How do you practice?

There are three stages:

Stage 1 is Mental: Become familiar with the organization of the material. Look over your notes and get the material clearly in mind.

Stage 2 is Verbal: Speak the presentation, out loud. What we think in our mind and what

comes out our mouth do not always mesh. Actually speaking the presentation, out loud, helps you to organize your thoughts in a verbal way and allows you to smooth out those rough edges before appearing before the group.

Stage 3 is Finesse: Practice your actual delivery, using the visual aids you will use. You don't need to have the equipment, but you do need to practice the delivery. Time your presentation. It is unethical to use the time allotted to another. How you go about this final stage is very personal. Some people like to practice before friends, family, or colleagues. Others prefer to be behind closed doors with four walls. Choose your method, but practice.

Conclusion

By this time, you should feel quite comfortable with your ability to make a presentation. You know how to plan the presentation based on the type of speech you are making, organize the material, prepare and use effective visual aids, and deliver with style. Remember, good speakers are not born. It makes no difference how well you know your topic—if you have not planned your presentation and practiced it, your chances of making a good delivery are slim. The more you present, the easier it will be for you to organize and deliver. Prepare yourself, then have confidence in your abilities.

You can do it!

